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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the responsibility of educational institutions to improve the social and civic values and the behavior of youth while illustrating the condition of civic education. U.S. children educated during the Vietnam War and Watergate Eras developed a weakened sense of citizenship obligations. Without a government-sponsored nursery school program where civic education can begin, many preschool and grade school students are not exposed to it. Moreover, high schools have put civic education aside in favor of English and mathematics skills so students can score highly on college entrance examinations. A 1984 study revealed that teachers did not consider social studies a substantial core of the curriculum. One method for teaching to civic education is law related education (LRE) which encourages first-hand participation by students, stressed by Jean Piaget and John Dewey as important for learning. The American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) response to the lack of civic education has been: (1) to issue a statement of principles; (2) to commission a textbook review; (3) to increase collective bargaining for educational reform funding; and (4) to challenge teachers to teach history in ways that encourage student participation. The paper concludes with a review of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy document, "A Nation Prepared," the Bradley Commission on History in Schools report, "Building a History Curriculum," the California History/Social Science Framework, and the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship (CAC). A 14-item bibliography is included. (DJC)

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TOPIC III

THE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN AMERICA AND ITALY TO IMPROVE THE SOCIAL AND CIVIC VALUES AND BEHAVIOR OF THEIR YOUTH

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The field of citizenship education lies fallow across the United States and Italy. Educational institutions are failing to teach the youth entrusted to them about civic values. The problem is not just with students, educators or curriculum; it exists on many levels.

This paper will again approach the question of "the responsibilities of educational institutions to improve the social and civic values and behavior of our youth" by illustrating both the sorry state of civic education in the United States as well as how organizations with new ideas are responding to this important challenge to improve.

It will also highlight the efforts of the American Federation of Teachers, the labor union I represent, which believes it has a role in the education reform movement and the revitalization of civic education.

STUDENTS AND CITIZENSHIP

First, we will explore conditions in the United States. When the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federally funded project, tested American high school students in 1971 and again in 1976 with a series of questions concerning citizenship, the results gave a bleak and worsening picture of our youth. One question epitomizes the situation. If the student saw someone slashing the tires of a car would the student report this incident to the police? In 1971, 74 percent of the students said yes, 14 percent no and 12 percent were undecided. In 1976 the second group of students showed a remarkable change. Only 67 percent said yes, no had dropped to ten percent but 22 percent were undecided.

NAEP did many detailed studies of students' attitudes on civics matters and chronicled the same findings. Students really don't know much about citizenship or civic responsibility.

They don't know much about history either. The 1987 study, What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?, a report of the first national assessment of history and literature by Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr., has some shocking conclusions. The authors found that the average student correctly answered 54.5 percent of all the history questions he or she attempted. They

concluded, "The, student's overall performance is extremely weak, the more so considering that 78.4 percent of them were enrolled in U.S. history at the time they took the assessment."

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN AMERICA

The AFT became involved in this issue because we believe that citizenship education in American schools is often mediocre and misconceived, if not missing. Our recent history has had an effect on students and teachers. Disillusionment about the Vietnam War was widespread. Followed by the ethical failure of U.S. President Richard Nixon who resigned from office in disgrace, a chilling effect on social and civic values in our country took place. Combined with the movement to "strengthen" the curriculum and stress science and math, citizenship education was almost forgotten in the school curriculum. The steady growth in citizenship education programs in U.S. schools that occurred after World War II began to slow by the end of the 70's. The Vietnam/Watergate generation of school children have developed a weakened sense of citizenship obligations. The emphasis in the schools changed to rights rather than obligations. "Don't vote. It only encourages them,"a cynical political cartoon states. These words don't seem as amusing when reports detail the appalling failure of Americans aged 18-24 to use their privilege to vote. In 1984, only 40 percent of that age group voted in the presidential election. In an off year, or Congressional election in 1982, only 25 percent voted.

POLARIZATION OF PATRIOTISM

The political apathy of youth is also seen in the population at large. The emergence of the right-wing pressure group, the Moral Majority, and television evangelists who wrap their piety in the flag has prompted the left to see patriotism as a negative or at best a shallow concept. Many of those in both the left and right wing appear to prefer to forget the subject of citizenship education. Students display apathy and ignorance of citizenship when tested. Teacher education colleges don't train teachers in citizenship education and teachers don't think social studies, including citizenship education,is a real subject.

The tone of social studies has changed through the years. When researcher Bessie Pierce did a study of social studies textbooks in 1930, she found that the majority promulgated respect and veneration for our ancestors. How do today's textbooks handle the Nixon presidency featuring a U.S. President who claimed he "was not a crook" as Richard Nixon did? Which side of the Vietnam war do we present, the protesters or the combat or a mishmash of both? To bring us to the present, how will the trading of arms for hostages be taught?

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

How educational institutions pass on their collective heritage is a question that concerns us all. The situation in America is not an easy one for teaching civic values. This is not to claim our history is so unique and Italians do not have instability and crises. The terrorism of the late Sixties and Seventies in Italy clearly presents a challenge.

Unlike Italy however, we are handicapped in our country because we do not have a nationwide system to educate children until they are five and sometimes six years old. Despite the fact that we know that effective early schooling is the base of a good education,in America we have no government sponsored nursery school system. We have some government money for preschool programs for children from poor families. Title XX of the Social Services Block Grant serves fewer then a half million children. In 1987, there were 4.8 million children younger than six who were poor in the U.S. Head Start, another federal effort, which is typically only a half-day program, serves fewer than one in five eligible children.

Many students are not being exposed to civic education in preschool or grade school because civic education is not deemed an important subject in high school. Social studies are not part of the elite core of the curriculum. Many boards of education across the country are listening to parents who want their children to test well so they can get into a good college. There is no Scholastic Aptitude Test, an important American test students must take for admission into college, for citizenship education. The SAT measures verbal and math ability.

TEACHER EDUCATION FAILS

The ability of instructors to teach these students is also a problem. Teacher training colleges have also ignored citizenship education. A paper presented to the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1984 reports a study on elementary school student teachers' knowledge of social studies content. Social studies are the tie-in line for citizenship values. The test was a simple one but given the grading standards used in elementary schools, none of the would-be teachers received an A and 40 percent would receive D's or F's.

Student teachers in another survey were interviewed on their perceptions on social studies. Most revealed that they thought that social studies in general was a nonsubject. They thought of it as human relations and citizenship indoctrination but not a substantial core of the curriculum.

This paper is not simply a pronouncement on the terrible state of citizenship education in United States schools. There are programs across the country that are doing the job of education for citizenship. There are educators that care about citizenship education. But in order to ensure informed and involved citizens, a nationwide effort needs to be generated to get vigorous citizenship education programs into the curriculum.

LEARNING BY DOING

Pedagogical theory and child development research, especially that done by Jean Piaget and John Dewey, holds that school children learn best by direct first-hand action. Many programs have used this concept to make citizenship education alive to the students.

Law-related education is a concept that is spreading into many U.S. school districts. LRE has as a major goal moving students away from negative characteristics such as seeing laws as restrictive, punitive and beyond the control of citizens and towards characteristics more in keeping with the demands of a democratic stewardship. For example, children should see laws as promotive, facilitative, comprehensible and alterable. LRE is infused into the existing curriculum, not added on a separate course of study.

LAW RELATED EDUCATION

In Los Angeles, Calif. the LRE features the City Builders program. Children build a model city in their classroom. As they construct their city they see the ways that cities are built can have either good or bad effects on the citizenry.

Two more brief examples of law-related education: in Maryland LRE features first-hand participation experiences for children through stories that have central characters facing issues dealing with citizenship responsibility.

Teachers have developed forty activities in Florida for legal education. They focus on the consequences of breaking rules, crimes and victims of crime. This is a program stressing responsibilities of citizens.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Texas has acquired a unique program for citizenship education. "Citizen Me" is an experiential curriculum. It also includes vocabulary exercises and is translated into Spanish.

Other school special citizenship education programs can be found across the United States. One of the most creative programs is a small, school-based one. Richland Elementary School is part of the San Marcos, California unified school district. This school has a project called "Mighty Mustang

Memo." All students are given 3x5 cards with a brief explanation of the program on top. The challenge is to spread the good name of Richland Elementary School throughout the community. The students visit neighbors and ask if there are jobs they might do. When the job is finished, the neighbor fills in the Mighty Mustang Memo telling what the job was and the card is deposited in a box. After the Friday morning flag salute the principal draws six "memos" and the winning students have lunch with the principal. The community, parents and educators have hailed this program.

An important organization in the civic education field is the Center for Civic Education. CCE will inform you of their projects in other sessions. Their effective program in conjunction with the U.S. Bicentennial of the Constitution is highly successful and uses the expertise of practising teachers and academicians.

THE AFT CHALLENGE

The American Federation of Teachers supports these efforts but also acts as a change agent. My union represents 680,000 teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, public employees and nurses. We are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) the largest labor federation in our country.

Last year the American Federation of Teachers issued a Statement of Principles. It is a call to our nation's schools to purposely impart to their students the learning necessary for an informed, reasoned allegiance to the ideals of a free society. The AFT sent this Statement to prominent Americans and asked them to sign it as a way of showing support. Over 150 signatories ranging from former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford to actor Liv Ullman and John Cardinal O'Connor, prelate of New York City signed the Statement. When this document was released, the AFT was hailed by the American press and many educators for both its ideas and activism.

For example, William Raspberry of the influential Washington Post called the Statement, "a breathtaking proposal, given our current insistence upon maintaining neutrality among competing values, and it entails the risk that America's core ideal will, in some places, be badly taught." Raspberry went on to say that the AFT was right to make this challenge to the educational system.

R. Freeman Butts, the William F. Russell Professor Emeritus in the Foundations of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, a distinguished scholar, states in his new book, The Morality of Democratic Citizenship: Goals for Civic Education in the Republics Third Century, "I believe this Statement of Principles on teaching democracy in the schools struck a high point in public discussion of civic values in the education reform movement of the mid 1980s."

The AFT is moving forward with this project called,

"Education for Democracy." We believe educational institutions need to develop a strong commitment to what one of the founders of our country, Thomas Jefferson, who believed in a general education for all citizens "to enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom." We look to the schools because we are convinced that democracy's survival depends on transmitting to the new generation the political vision of liberty and equality that unites us as Americans. We see that we need the support of other institutions in this effort but we think schools are pivotal in any effort.

NEXT STEP

Our next step was to commission a textbook study of world history texts. The study, "Democracy's Untold Story: What World History Textbooks Neglect" is authored by noted historian Paul Gagnon who is a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts/Boston. The study asserts that the "ideas and principles of democracy are left unclear and incomplete. Its origins, adventures, needs and significance are nowhere systemically presented. Relying on such books alone, teachers cannot teach and students cannot grasp, the compelling story of peoples' struggles for freedom, self-government and justice on earth," Gagnon states.

His analysis is not intended as a comprehensive review of every topic in world studies that students must comprehend, but rather the topics chosen for review center on watershed events and ideas that have produced our democratic society. The focus is on the history of Western civilization, not, as Gagnon puts it, "because the West is inherently better than other civilizations but because it has produced democracy and many of the moral values that sustain it...And, it was also the West and not another civilization that produced from within itself the deadliest enemies of democracy, Bolshevism and Nazism, and we need to know why."

The AFT study calls for a stronger focus on the history of western civilization and challenges an educational trend towards one-year courses in world history or global education. Gagnon argues for an expanded history sequence with time enough to provide a balanced perspective of all major world civilizations; but if only one year is offered, he says, it must concentrate on what Americans most need to know to understand their own political heritage."

TEXTBOOK REVIEW

Each textbook was reviewed by Dr. Gagnon for its coverage of key events and periods in the history of western democracy, including Greek and Roman democracies, Judaism and Christianity, Islam and Christendom in the Middle Ages, feudalism, the Renaissance and the Reformation, absolutism, the English

Revolution, the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, and the comparative experiences of Europe and the U.S. in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The AFT believes better textbooks and teaching materials will emerge when there is more opportunity for classroom and university teachers to work together to decide what subject matter is most worth teaching and how can it best be taught to students from divergent backgrounds.

The next publication of the Education for Democracy Project will be an analysis of American history textbooks also written by Dr. Gagnon. It will be published next year.

AFT AND EDUCATION REFORM

The AFT is excited about our Education for Democracy Project but we are making other contributions to reform our educational institutions.

AFT affiliates have already pioneered districtwide reform through collective bargaining which we believe is the best means of pursuing reform. We support our innovative locals and we work to have adequate federal, state and local funding for educational reform. We believe increased teacher salaries, more money spent per pupil and strong ancillary services are also important. Schools should be structured in a collegial way and evaluation and setting of high standards should reflect this.

One concept we have found to be effective concerns a school-within-a-school in which interested groups of teachers would get space in a school building as well as support services to work on specific education reform ideas. The teachers would be self-selected and willing to try new ideas. This idea speaks to the diversity of school populations and the need to experiment with new ways to teach. There is no one, good way to teach every child in America but we know there are many effective ways. We know all children are not motivated the same way. This plan would allow for variety in the school setting.

CHANGE IN CURRICULUM

We are also looking for change in the curriculum. The study of history is seen by the AFT as the chief subject in educating students for democracy. We believe the curriculum should be reordered around it. It is impossible to reach a comprehension of economic, political, social and cultural questions without examining them in their historic context. History allows students to have the perspective to compare their way of life with others. History enables a look to the past and outside the U.S. boundaries and properly taught, it can help students to think critically and look behind appearances. History too, is an integrative subject upon which social sciences, literature and arts are better understood.

The humanities are also important. Values and moral integrity are better discovered by students in reading of history, literature, philosophy and biography. Values need to be encountered, not "taught." The state and its schools should be concerned with citizens' ability to tell right from wrong.

History should be chronologically taught and in ways to engage students. Historical biography, debate over central ideas excited by a colorful historical narrative will reach students. We recommend the central theme of study to be the dramatic struggles of people around the world to win and preserve their freedom.

This proposal calls for more effort from teachers who are on the front lines in this effort. School administrators should support teachers who have this important work to do.

EDUCATION REFORM

Americans are struggling, as Italians are, to find ways to successfully educate youth. In the U.S.,education reform was not a brief front page issue now forgotten. Many predicted after the initial splash made by "A Nation At Risk," an important government study on the problems in education, died down, that public attention to this issue would die also. This is not the case. "A Nation At Risk" was done by the National Commission on Excellence in Education for the Department of Education and published in 1983. Education reform has opened up the schools and the education process to new ideas. The Carnegie report: "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century" is just one of the many thoughtful looks at education that has kept the issue before the press and public.

While the Carnegie report deals mainly with teachers and teacher training, it also states: "School must provide a deeper understanding necessary for a self-governing citizenship." The authors add that the cost of the schools not doing this is the gradual erosion of our democratic birthright. They urge that schools be reconstructed to be relevant for today. This includes the teacher training colleges. They are being scrutinized with the idea of changing the content of what they teach teachers. This is an opportunity to make citizenship education an important subject to teachers and students.

UTILIZE CLASSROOM TEACHERS

The Carnegie report, which the AFT had an important role in shaping, also stresses the importance of teachers. In order to have an effective citizenship education program teachers should be directly involved in citizenship education. Several of the programs previously mentioned were designed by classroom teachers. They know from experience what works in the classroom. Educators are significant too because they impart our common culture, heritage and values. The Carnegie report

urges more trust and responsibility for teachers. Classroom teachers are essential for a successful citizenship education program in the future.

BRADLEY COMMISSION

A nationwide effort to improve the teaching of history in the schools is coming from the Bradley Commission. The Commission is made up of seventeen distinguished historians and classroom teachers. It makes an argument for history as essential to civic education. The Commission wants history and geography restored to the core of social studies, from kindergarten through the twelfth grade:

> History belongs in the school programs of all students, regardless of their academic standing and preparation, of their curricular track, or of their plans for the future. It is vital for all citizens in a democracy, because it provides the only avenue we have to reach an understanding of ourselves and of our society, in relation to the human condition over time.

The Commission notes that while other social science courses in sex and health education, driver education and computer education have expanded in the curriculum, the number of required courses in history has declined. They found that currently fifteen percent of our students do not take any American history in high school, and 50 percent do not study either world history of western civilization. A reordering of our priorities is clearly necessary. While learning to drive an automobile is a useful skill, how much more important it is for a student to understand the meaning and principles of our democratic society?

Besides a thoughtful list of recommendations, the Commission gives vital themes and narratives for teachers which relate to the "Topics for Study." The Topics cites issues that are fundamental to the study of American and World history.

CALIFORNIA FRAMEWORK

The new California History-Social Science Framework is a state effort that also reflects this need for change. California is a leader among the states in education and has been willing to try to reform its state education system. The proposal has not been implemented at this time but it is being disseminated throughout the state. It restores history and geography to the center of the social studies program and more than doubles the time now spent on them in most American schools. It looks at California's multiracial and multicultural population but declares that a common understanding of democratic ideas and practices and a common allegiance to them are the best

guarantees for a pluralist society to live in liberty, justice and peace. The Framework says that skills follow out of subject matter, not the other way around. It also states that academic content taught without appropriate pedagogy is as useless as the most innovative teaching methods not tied to rich academic content.

The California Framework recommends that history be taught in eleven out of thirteen grades in contrast to the five grades in which it was previously taught and asks for three years of world history instead of just one as they do now. The curriculum focuses on the study of continuity and change. The Framework also stresses local flexibility since this is not a curriculum but a guide and emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, teacher selection of topics and reading and imaginative use of local community resources.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Citizenship education needs resources too. The Council for the Advancement of Citizenship is an organization in the United States that is a national consortium of organizations and individuals committed to promoting informed and responsible citizenship. CAC is uniquely qualified to be an important ally to those institutions working in this field. Formed by organizations such as the American Federation of Teachers, CAC has successfully brought together diverse groups in harmony under the flag of citizenship education. This year, for example, the eighth annual Jennings Randolph Forum, named for a United States Senator and founding member, will meet in Washington, D.C. to discuss a crucial national issue as it relates to citizenship education. National leaders and participants from all sectors convene to study, discuss and make recommendations to CAC's membership and others about new directions for civic learning. CAC publishes Citizenship Education News which acts as a clearinghouse for timely articles and editorials on citizenship education issues and informs members of the activities of member organizations in the field.

Other activities include a new civic education program regarding the meaning of citizenship in American life. CIVITAS will produce a curriculum framework to serve as a resource for elementary and secondary schools across the United States. CAC also has been active in commemorating the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights and also publishes the Bicentennial Leadership News which is officially recognized by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution . Still another project concerns citizenship education and peace. The Council for the Advancement of Citizenship also sends monthly Information Updates, that are reports to highlight the knowledge of skills necessary to be responsible citizens in an interdependent world.

FUTURE GOALS

The ground is fertile for the seeds of a renaissance of citizenship education programs to grow. The whole field of civic education in the U.S. is in flux. There has been much emphasis on process, but the AFT believes that substance is key. We would like students to know how to function in our democratic society so well that they would have an instinctive ability to choose democratic values if they are ever put to the test.

Citizenship education needs to be revitalized for the future well-being of both of our countries. It is crucial to the production of informed citizens who are the key to the future of our democratic society.

"If you do not renew a fertile field by constant ploughing, it will only yield grass and thorns." --Ovid.

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